



## DATES TO REMEMBER

- Supermarket of Veterans Benefits—  
September 14, 2006
- Board of Veterans Affairs Meets—  
October 6, 2006
- ADVA VSO Training Conference—  
October 24-26, 2006
- Veterans' Day—  
November 11, 2006

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# The Alabama Veteran

Bob Riley  
Governor

S U M M E R 2 0 0 6

W. Clyde Marsh  
Commissioner

## Commissioner's Corner

The Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs is rock solid in resolve and gaining momentum as we move forward. We will continue to fulfill this nation's and state's commitment to veterans. Our objective is to honor our veterans' sacrifices and to dignify the cause they served, by serving them.

Memorial Day was observed on May 29<sup>th</sup> throughout our great state. Memorial Day is always a solemn occasion, but a necessary one. It is a tradition and indeed a tribute which must be made in honor of our veterans, heroes, forefathers and mothers so that we never forget the tremendous sacrifice they made not only for us, but the world.

Most of you are aware of the theft of VA data which took place in May of 2006 where 26.5 million veterans' personal and financial information were put in jeopardy of being compromised. All veterans were urged to check and monitor their credit. Free credit reports are available to everyone on an annual basis. A credit report can be requested from each of the three major credit bureaus: Equifax, Experian or TransUnion at [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) or by calling 1-877-322-8228.

The missing VA hard-drive and data was recovered by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The FBI's post recovery analysis indicates with a high degree of confidence that the data was not compromised and as a result, the VA will not provide free credit monitoring for veterans.

As a result of our expanded veterans' outreach programs, a Supermarket of Benefits is planned for September 14, 2006. The location will be in the Montgomery Mall center court from 10:30 am until 3:00 pm. This will be a one-stop shopping opportunity designed with veterans in mind.

The Supermarket of Benefits will bring together the following experts to assist veterans: Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs Service Officers, Veterans Benefits Administration and Service Officers (federal), VA Medical Center personnel, Veterans Employment and Rehabilitation, Operation Grateful Heart, Social Security Administration, homeless veterans counselors, and others to provide a plethora of information and services which should lead to more benefits to deserving veterans.

**ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF  
VETERANS AFFAIRS****STATE COMMISSIONER**

W. Clyde Marsh

Brenda Ingram—Executive Assistant

**ASSISTANTS**

Mike Northcutt—Personnel &amp; Admin.

Willie Moore— Education Services

**VETERANS HOME PROGRAMS**

Kim Justice—Veterans Home Coordinator

**CLAIMS**

William Rumph—Director of Claims

**BUDGET / FINANCE**

June Rogers—Senior Accountant

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**TRAINING**

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**INTERNET WEB ADDRESS**Web: [www.va.state.al.us](http://www.va.state.al.us)E-mail: [adva@va.alabama.gov](mailto:adva@va.alabama.gov)**STILL SERVING VETERANS**

Still Serving Veterans (SSV) is a non-profit service organization proactively committed to long-term career development and life skills support for severely wounded veterans and their spouses. SSV strives to optimize post-military career opportunities for severely wounded veterans by facilitating and promoting business and community opportunities within the Huntsville/Madison County area, and in conjunction with local businesses, educational institutions, government agencies and business/community associations.

They offer a unique, holistic support services approach to job training and career transition/counseling, as well as coordination with relevant government, public, and private organizations. SSV complements DoD's current initiatives such as the Army Wounded Warrior Program which incorporates and integrates support services for severely wounded veterans and their families throughout their phased progression to home station and final destination. SSV focuses on continuing the nurturing and enabling of wounded veterans and their spouses in new career and community opportunities.

For more information on Still Serving Veterans, visit their web site at [www.stillservingveterans.org](http://www.stillservingveterans.org) or call them at 1-866-778-4645.

**HOUSING AND BENEFITS BILL SIGNED**

Legislation to help service members and veterans with their housing and other benefit needs was signed into law June 15th by President Bush.

Among its many provisions is one which authorizes VA to make grants available to assist with housing adaptations at a family member's home in which a severely disabled service member is temporarily residing.

The legislation will also allow service members who have been legally determined to be totally disabled at the time of their separation from the military to have up to two years from their separation date to apply for premium-free Service-members' Group Life Insurance coverage. More importantly, the legislation will enable them to convert their coverage to Veterans' Group Life Insurance or an individual plan or policy during the same two-year period.

The Veterans' Housing Opportunity and Benefits Act of 2006 reflects a compromise agreement reached between House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs on a host of veterans' benefits provisions cleared by either body of Congress during the first session of the 109th Congress.

## STOLEN VA EQUIPMENT RECOVERED

In May 2006, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) learned that an employee, a data analyst, took home electronic data from VA that was stored in his home on a laptop computer. He was not authorized to take this data home. The laptop was later stolen from his residence.

On June 29<sup>th</sup>, Veterans Affairs Secretary R. James Nicholson announced that law enforcement authorities had recovered the stolen laptop and external hard drive. According to the FBI, a preliminary review of the equipment by computer forensic experts determined that the database remained intact and had not been accessed since it was stolen.

The VA continues to operate a call center that people can contact to get more information as it becomes available. That toll-free number is 1-800-FED INFO (1-800-333-4636). The call center is operating from 8:00 am to 9:00 pm (EDT), Monday-Saturday as long as it is needed.

## VETERANS' COALITION

Five major veterans service organizations have joined together to create the Veterans Coalition, Inc., a 501 (c) 3 non-profit corporation. The American Legion, VFW, DAV, AMVETS, and Paralyzed Veterans of America formed the Veterans Coalition to define, research, and study critical issues facing our nation's veterans.

In recent years, several congressional commissions and presidential task forces have studied veterans' health and benefit policies and programs with very little resulting from their reports and recommendations.

The Honorable Harry N. Walters, a former Veterans Affairs administrator from 1983 to 1986 during the Reagan Administration, was elected president and chief executive officer of Veterans Coalition, Inc. David M. Sevier has been appointed the executive director of the "Commission on the Future for America's Veterans."

"The Commission will conduct an objective and independent review of the most challenging issues facing veterans and will report its findings to Congress, the Executive branch and the American people," Walters said. "As our service members continue to fight the global war against terror, it is imperative that important veterans' issues be resolved as soon as possible."

The board of directors of Veterans Coalition, Inc. is composed of five representatives—one from each of the founding organizations and the chief executive officer. The Veterans Coalition will be located in Washington, DC.

### ALABAMA BOARD OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Governor Bob Riley—Chairman  
Wayne Dial—Vice Chairman  
Ken Rollins—Deputy Vice Chairman  
Brenda Ingram—Board Secretary

### American Ex-Prisoners of War

Robert Baker—Selma

### American Legion

Dolores "Dee" Hardin—Prattville  
Lannon Limbaugh—Birmingham  
Larry Sepanski—Trinity  
William Wyatt—Harpersville

### American Veterans

Spence Stewart—Prattville

### Disabled American Veterans

James Graves—Vinemont  
Mark S. Moore—Killen  
Willie Pruitt—Talladega

### Veterans of Foreign Wars

Roland Day—Birmingham  
Wayne Dial—Talladega  
Rayburn Hill—Tyler  
Charles Stephens—Fort Payne

### Military Order of the Purple Heart

Robert J. "Bob" Hewitt—Blountsville

### Vietnam Veterans of America

Ken Rollins—Oxford

## IRAQ-AFGHANISTAN MEMORIAL DEDICATED

On Saturday, May 27, 2006, citizens of Cullman and the surrounding area gathered at the Cullman County courthouse to honor those who have served in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Three Cullman county residents Adam Fales, Jonathan Smith and Mike Nelson have made the ultimate sacrifice while serving in Iraq.

Mr. George Mann of the Military Order of the Purple Heart presented plaques to the families of the fallen as a token of the local community's appreciation for their service and sacrifice.

ADVA Commissioner Clyde Marsh joined Major General James Pillsbury, Commanding General of the U.S. Army Missile Command at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, the events key note speaker, in addressing those gathered for the event. In addressing those present, Commissioner Marsh said, "The men and women of our nation's armed forces deserve to be recognized for their service, especially those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. That is why we are here today."



Left to Right: ADVA Commissioner Marsh, Cullman County Veterans Service Officer Johanna Chambers, Cullman County Administrative Support Assistant Debra Moore, and ADVA District I Manager Lucious Richardson.

## GOVERNOR RILEY VISITS STATE VETERANS HOME



Governor Riley visits with Bill Nichols State Veterans Home Residents.

Governor Riley recently spent time visiting with the veterans of the Bill Nichols State Veterans Home in Alexander City.

The visit came during a week long celebration of National Nursing Home Week. The Governor joined the veterans for a Hawaiian Luau. He spent time individually meeting and talking to the veterans and their families.

Governor Riley expressed how delighted he was to see all the smiling faces. "Of all the changes we've made over the past three-and-half years, the change to improve the service at our veterans' homes is one of the most important," Governor Ri-

ley said. He thanked the veterans for their service and expressed his commitment to Alabama's Veterans. "They're all heroes. They built this country and never really asked for much. We owe it to them to make sure we take good care of them," said Governor Riley. Commissioner Marsh thanked Governor Riley for his focus on issues affecting veterans and for his visit to the Bill Nichols State Veterans Home.



## TUT FANN DAY CELEBRATED

Saturday, July 15, 2006 was a day of celebration at the Floyd E. "Tut" Fann State Veterans Home. It was the 11<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the opening of the home. The day began with remarks by Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner, Clyde Marsh and former Board of Veterans Affairs member, Mr. Hollis Bridges. Monetary donations were presented to the facility by the Military Order of the Purple Heart Chapter 2201 and the Disabled American Veterans Chapter 26 to be used for residents in the home. This was followed by the reading of a proclamation signed by Governor Riley which proclaimed Saturday, July 15, 2006 as "Tut" Fann Day in Alabama.

Lunch was prepared and served by American Legion Post 237, Military Order of the Purple Heart Chapter 2201, Disabled American Veterans Chapter 26, and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2702 and Post 5162. Entertainment included the Rocket City Chorus, the Way Out of Line Dancers, Dennis Balentine, a Elvis impersonator, and Square One, a local band that performs frequently at American Legion Post 237.

Special guests in attendance were State Representative Sue Schmitz, State Board of Veterans Affairs members Larry Sepanski and Dee Hardin, American Legion State Commander Willis Frazier, DAV National Treasurer Harold Hicks and members of the Patriot Guard Riders. Tut Fann Day is an annual event celebrated at the home.

## WILLIAM F. GREEN HOME PREPARES FOR HURRICANE SEASON

Hurricane season is upon us once again and is predicted to be just as busy as the last two. On July 25, 2006, an evacuation exercise was conducted at the William F. Green State Veterans Home to simulate conditions during a natural disaster. The Deputy Director, Roy Wulff, of the Baldwin County Emergency Management Agency assisted in the evaluation of the exercise as well as Kim Justice, Veterans Homes Coordinator, Mr. Lavon Henley, William F. Green Home Representative, and Mr. Robert Graham, Health Management Resources Regional Manager.



Home staff participate in mock evacuation exercise.

Staff was utilized as "evacuee residents" which had to be rescued from a wing of the facility. The key was to practice evacuation procedures while causing minimal disruption to residents. The scenario did not allow for the area to be accessible from the corridor so staff had to quickly determine an alternate route for evacuation. The "injured" residents were taken to triage to evaluate their need for further treatment. All staff members had to know their designated task and act quickly to account for the each resident.

Once the exercise was complete, all key personnel met with the evaluators to discuss the mock evacuation drill. The objective of the exercise was to gain knowledge to become more prepared in the event of an actual occurrence. That objective was met. There were some details discovered that will be added into the plan. Mr. Wulff of Baldwin County EMA stated, "I am pleased to see this level of preparedness in our veteran's homes." We will continue to attend hurricane seminars to gain new knowledge and will conduct more training exercises to improve on preparedness. Our ultimate goal is to protect the safety and welfare of the veterans who are entrusted to our care.

## MONTGOMERY GI BILL

The Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) can be a very confusing issue. If you don't understand how the GI Bill works, you could make poor decisions about how and when to use your benefits.

The MGIB is available to active duty personnel and veterans to assist with education cost and provides up to 26 months of education benefits. A full time student can receive up to \$1,034 per month to cover education fees and other associated costs. To qualify for the MGIB, you must have contributed \$100 per month for the first 12 months you were on active duty, or qualify under VEAP conversion. You also must have served a minimum of 24 months on active duty and be honorably discharged.

Benefits expire ten years from the date of discharge. This time period can be extended if you have another period of active duty that lasted at least 90 consecutive days. For further information on the GI Bill education benefit please visit:  
[www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov).

## ALASAFE

Through AlaSafe.gov, family members and caregivers of individuals with forms of dementia may now provide information about their loved ones to authorized Alabama law enforcement officials in the event their loved one wanders or becomes lost.

AlaSafe.gov is a secure government website available as a free service. AlaSafe.gov is designed, maintained and operated under the authority of the Alabama Criminal Justice Information Center.

## FAST TRACK PROGRAM

The VA Regional Office has advised that due to its increased claims backlog, the Fast Track Program has been temporarily suspended.

The Fast Track Program, which was established in 1997 was designed to expedite claims that did not require rating decisions. The VARO will continue to expedite hardship requests or those claims involving terminal illnesses.

## ADVA SUPERMARKET OF VETERANS BENEFITS

*You've served your country honorably.  
You've earned benefits for that service.  
Do you know what they are???*

**Join us at the**

### Supermarket of Veterans Benefits

**When: Thursday, September 14, 2006  
10:30 AM – 3:00 PM**

**Where: Montgomery Mall Center Court  
Montgomery, Alabama**

Contact Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs  
for more information:

(334) 242-5077

